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Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Oceans and the law of the sea

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/71/L.26

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the statement submitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/71/16), in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/71/L.26 on oceans and the law of the sea. During its consideration of the statement, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, received on 9 December 2016.

2. In resolution 65/37 A, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to designate the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat, to provide secretariat support to the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (the Regular Process), including its established institutions.

II. Activities related to the proposed request

3. The recommendations and programme of work for the period 2017-2020 of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process are set out in section III and the attachment thereto of its report (see A/71/362). The activities are

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organized under two outputs: the second World Ocean Assessment(s) and Regular Process support for other ocean-related intergovernmental processes.

4. In order to implement draft resolution A/71/L.26, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea would have to perform, inter alia, the following functions (see A/C.5/71/16, para. 11):

(a) Provide support to the Regular Process, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole (which will hold two meetings in 2017), the Bureau of the Working Group, the Co-Chairs, the Group of Experts, the regional workshops, the delegations and the network of national focal points;

(b) Hold inter-agency cooperation and coordination meetings;

(c) Prepare, draft or review documents including technical abstracts, briefings and summaries of views;

(d) Conduct awareness-raising campaigns and develop and maintain a website;

(e) Administer the Regular Process trust fund.

5. The Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of supporting the operations of the Regular Process, which was established in 2010, has received contributions amounting to an average of $57,000 per year.[1] The Committee was also informed that since the inception of the voluntary trust fund, the limited funds available have been sufficient only for assisting members of the Group of Experts from developing countries in attending meetings of the Group of Experts, and meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole. In addition, the Secretary-General was able to secure some in-kind contributions for the implementation of the first cycle of the Regular Process, notably for the hosting of regional workshops. **The Advisory Committee encourages the Secretary-General to renew his efforts to secure contributions to the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of supporting the operations of the Regular Process.**

6. The Advisory Committee was also informed upon enquiry that to achieve the outputs for 2017, the Division would have to carry out the following activities in particular:

(a) In relation to output 1: (i) obtain subscriptions to scientific publications and databases; (ii) establish, and liaise with, national focal points; (iii) appoint and constitute the pool of experts by confirming the interest of the 600 individuals who served in the pool of experts of the first cycle and by identifying and appointing additional experts; (iv) establish working methods and develop a communications and collaborative document management systems; (v) prepare the draft outline of the assessment; (vi) compile recent and ongoing assessments and develop a database for such assessments; and (vii) organize regional workshops to raise awareness and provide information and receive feedback on the first global integrated marine assessment;

[1] The voluntary trust fund for the purpose of supporting the operations of the Regular Process was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/71 of 4 December 2009.

(b) In relation to output II: (i) support the establishment of working methods and the communications and collaborative document management systems; (ii) support the preparation of the outline(s) of the Technical Abstract(s) and the review and approval of the outline(s); (iii) support the preparation of draft technical abstract(s); (iv) review the Technical Abstracts and manage consultant services for formatting, editing, desktop publishing, translating and printing the Technical Abstracts; and (v) prepare for and provide substantive servicing for numerous meetings.

III. Resource requirements

7. Under paragraph 316 of draft resolution A/71/L.26, the Secretary-General would be requested to secure the necessary resources, including the option of the regular budget of the Organization, for the programme of the work period 2017-2020 for the second cycle of the Regular Process.

8. In paragraph 12 of his statement, the Secretary-General indicates that the total estimated costs for the bienniums 2016-2017, 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 would amount to $4,392,200 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management; under section 8, Legal affairs; and under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services.

9. The adoption of the draft resolution would give rise to additional requirements, including:

(a) Two new temporary posts, 1 Programme Officer (P-3) and 1 Programme Assistant (General Service (Other level)), which would be required to strengthen the capacity of the Division, including the provision of assistance to support the efficient and effective secretariat services provided by the Division to the Regular Process, including its established institutions. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, in 2015, pursuant to paragraph 322 of its resolution 70/235, the General Assembly had approved two posts: 1 Legal Officer (P-3) to assist the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292 and to administer the voluntary trust fund; and 1 Programme Officer (P-4) to manage, supervise and carry out the activities of the secretariat of the Regular Process. The Committee was also informed that 2 additional staff members (1 P-5 and 1 General Service) are providing assistance to the Regular Process and that the staffing of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea comprised 34 posts and positions as at 9 December 2016, including 1 vacant P-3 post. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the post of Programme Assistant (General Service). Considering that two posts in the Professional category were approved in 2015 to help manage the Regular Process and that two additional staff members from the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea are providing assistance for this purpose, the Committee recommends against approval of the Programme Officer (P-3) post. Any related non-post resources should be adjusted accordingly;**

(b) Additional documentation services which would constitute an additional workload for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management,

of one post-session document (22,500 words) in 2017 and one post-session document (375,000 words) in 2020, to be issued in all six languages;

(c) Operational resources such as for consultants, travel of staff and meeting participants, contractual services and general operating costs relating to the achievement of outputs I and II, outreach and capacity-building under the programme budgets for the three bienniums (A/C.5/71/16, para. 12).

10. The Secretary-General indicates in his statement that the requirements for the biennium 2016-2017 would be $748,100, to be provided through an additional appropriation to be charged against the contingency fund.

IV. Conclusion

11. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly are contained in paragraphs 17 to 20 of the statement of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/71/16). **Subject to its comments and recommendations above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee inform the General Assembly that should it adopt draft resolution A/71/L.26:**

(a) An additional appropriation of resource requirements in the amount of $604,600 for 2017, comprising $97,900 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, $461,500 under section 8, Legal affairs, and $45,200 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, would arise under the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017;

(b) The General Assembly would be requested to approve the establishment of a temporary General Service (Other Level) post under section 8, Legal affairs;

(c) An amount of $9,900 would be required under section 36, Staff assessment, of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment, of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.